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ABSTRACT

In an attempt to determine the academic expectations of beginning Master's level students in a Counselor Education program, a 50-item questionnaire was administered to 38 of those students. Additionally, the entire faculty of this department was surveyed using the same instrument to determine how closely their views matched those of the students. Results indicate that students and faculty agreed on about 75% of the items. Possible reasons accounting for the dissagreements were discussed and the recommendation made that the faculty clearly articulate the philosophy, goals, and educational experiences as they currently exist in an effort to ensure mutual understanding and satisfaction. (Author)

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EXPECTATIONS OF BEGINNING COUNSELORS

by

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Education proceeds most expeditiously when students' expectations are closely aligned with those of the faculty. Such a situation occurs when both parties have and understanding of the other's position. Communication enhances this knowledge, and the degree to which it is provided will determine the success of their relationship. The purpose of this communication should be to eliminate any discrepancy between what the faculty is offering and what the students expect to receive from the relationship. If this is not done adequately, then role conflict is likely to emerge. Katz and Kahn (1966) describe role conflict as that situation where two or more role-sendings occur simultaneously, and that compliance with one precludes compliance with the other. This might come about when a student is frustrated in realizing his expectations because they are at variance with the realities of his program. Under these conditions, satisfaction cannot be gauranteed. The likelihood that beginning students in a Counselor Education program will place different priorities on certain activities and bodies of knowledge, is easily understood when one considers that this is a profession which requires that you first be a member of some other profession. Students usually enter the field of Guidance and Counseling from other professions, such as teaching, or directly from undergraduate school. Since Counselor Education is rarely offered as undergraduate training, it is likely that beginning students will not have an accurate perception of what they can expect to find in graduate school.

In order to assess the expectations of beginning Master's level students in Counselor Education at a Southeasetrn university, a 50-item questionnaire was administered to 38 of those students enrolled in the 1975 Summer Session.

Their responses were compared to those of the faculty on the same instrument.

METHOD

Subjects

Students from three Master's level courses in Counselor Education volunteer to participate in the study (N=38). They had earned an average of 6.7 graduate hours in this major prior to completing the questionnaire. The entire faculty (N=11) in the Counselor Education Department responded to the same questionnaire.

Students were asked to indicate their professional goal upon completion of their degree by job setting and title. All students indicated their expected title to be "Counselor" and their setting as follows:

A) elementary (N=4)

B) secondary (N=16)

C) college (N=7)

D) agency (N=11)

Because of the low frequency in the elementary category, those students were combined with students in the secondary category under the name of "School Counselor".

Instrument

A 50-item questionnaire with a Likert-type 5-point rating scale was constructed by the author based, in part, on the competencies outlined in the booklet "Preparation of guidance associates and professional counselors within the framework of a competency-based program" by the Counselor Education staff at North Texas State University (ACES, 1973). The values assigned to the points on the scale were as follows: 1=no importance; 2=slight importance; 3=moderate impotance; 4=very much importance; and 5=extreme importance.

Procedure

Permission was obtained to administer the questionnaire from the instructors of the classes included in this study. After a brief introduction, the questionnaires were distributed accompanied by a set of standard instructions on how to complete the instrument. Salient features of those instructions included an explanation of what was meant by professional goal (i.e. job setting and title). Students were asked to complete every item and that any item unfamiliar to them should be rated 1, since it was not possible to be in their expectation repertoire if they did not know what it was prior to seeing on the questionnaire.

No one took longer than 15 minutes to complete the questionnaire. All students cooperated with the instructions to respond to every item. Upon collection of the last questionnaire, the purpose of the study was explained and students were informed that the results would be available in 2-3 weeks.

Each faculty member was given a questionnaire and asked to respond as he or she perceived the importance of each item as it actually existed in the M.Ed. program.

RESULTS

The data were categorized into the following groups for the purpose of comparison: faculty; school, college; agency; and all students. Means were determined for each item in each group and are presented in Table 1. That table shows the least amount of agreement, by item grouping, was found in what may be called the areas of human service (#2,5,8, & 46);

Insert Table 1 about here

TABLE 1
Mean Responses per Item by Professional Orientation

Item # and Descriptor	School	College	Agency	All Ss	Faculty
1. Projective techniques	2.6	3.0	3.0	2.8	1.1
2. Family & marriage counseling	3.0	3.6	3.6	3.3	3.4
3. Make referrals	4.3	4.3	4.4	4.1	4.7
4. Organize guidanceeprogram	3.9	2.1	2.1	3.1	4.3
5. Rehabilitate disabled	2.5	2.9	3.8	2.9	2.7
6. Computer applications	3.1	2.1	2.1	2.2	2.6
7. Dynamics of group counseling	4.5	4.7	4.7	4.6	4.6
8. Drug/alcohol counseling	3.9	4.0	4.1	4.3	3.3
9. Systematic Desensitization	3.0	2.9	3.1	3.0	2.6
10. Self-initiative	4.6	4.6	4.1	4.4	4.2
11. Vocational choice theory	3.6	3.1	2.8	3.4	4.0
12. Developmental counseling	4.2	3.9	3.6	4.0	4.4
13. Abnormal & deviant behavior	4.0	3.3	4.6	4.0	2.9
14. Client-centered therapy	3.9	3.6	3.8	3.8	3.3
15. Psychoanalytic techniques	2.6	2.3	3.3	2.7	1.7
16. Occupational/voc. info.	4.1	4.6	3.6	4.0	4.0
17. Physical & psych growth	4.4	3.7	3.6	4.0	4.2
18. Motivate others	4.7	4.4	4.1	4.4	3.6
19. Biological bases of behavior	3.8	3.3	3.5	3.6	3.1
20. Behavior modification	3.5	3.4	4.3	4.3	3.8
21. Control others	2.3	1.9	2.4	2.2	1.3
22. Solve own problems	3.4	2.5	2.2	2.9	2.2
23. Better teacher	3.3	2.7	2.0	2.8	2.6
24. Retarded children	2.7	1.9	2.1	2.4	2.5
25. Help normal children	4.6	3.9	4.2	4.3	4.6

TABLE 1 continued
Mean Responses per Item by Professional Orientation

Item and Descriptor	School	College	Agency	All Ss	Faculty
26. Tests of personality disorder	2.8	3.3	3.4	3.1	1.7
27. Group psychotherapy	2.9	3.3	3.8	3.1	1.6
28. Vocational interests tests	3.6	4.4	3.8	3.8	3.6
29. DOT	3.5	4.4	3.3	3.7	2.7
30. Help others help themselves	4.7	4.9	4.9	4.8	4.6
31. Plat therapy	3.6	3.6	2.8	3.3	2.2
32. Learn about self	3.9	1.5	3.7	3.9	2.5
33. Intelligence tests	3.2	3.1	3.2	3.2	2.4
34. Tolerant of others	4.2	4.3	3.8	3.8	3.9
35. Lead group counseling group	4.6	4.7	4.8	4.6	4.6
36. School administrator	1.7	1.6	1.4	1.6	1.8
37. Group guidance	4.1	4.6	4.5	4.3	4.2
38. RET	3.0	3.1	2.8	2.9	3.5
39. Private practice	1.9	2.4	2.8	2.3	1.8
40. OOH	3.4	4.0	3.2	3.4	3.1
41. Tests of healthy personality	2.5	4.0	3.3	3.1	3.1
42. Career education	3.4	4.0	3.0	3.4	3.6
43. Limitations and strengths	4.1	4.4	3.6	4.1	3.9
44. Gain personal insight	4.0	4.1	4.4	4.3	3.8
45. Experiment with animals	1.4	1.1	1.4	1.4	1.1
46. Abortion counseling	1.4	3.3	3.2	2.8	2.0
47. Diagnose mental illness	2.5	4.0	2.3	2.6	1.6
48. Cure neurosis	2.9	2.4	2.0	2.4	1.6
49. Consult with teachers	4.3	3.1	3.1	3.7	4.1
50. Experiment with humans	1.5	1.9	2.0	1.7	2.7

psychotherapy (#9,15,27,38, & 48); and personality assessment (# 1,21, 26,33,41, & 47) where students gave higher ratings than faculty by an average of .7 points.

The greatest agreement was in the category of group work (#7,35, & 37) where students anf faculty alike agreed on the importance of this activity. Further consensus was found in the items describing a better understanding of oneself (#10,22,43, & 44), and those relating to vocational/career counseling (#16,28,40, & 42). The absolute deviation of students' ratings from those of the faculty .12. These comparisons were determined by subtracting the mean score per item as rated by the faculty from the mean ratings made by all students.

In an attempt to determine how groups differed in rated importance of a given item, response frequencies for each item were converted to percentages and grouped according to professional orientation. The obtained percentages for ratings 4 and 5 (very much and extreme importance) were combined into one category labeled "important". Netx, the percentages of each of the student groups were compared to those of the faculty for each item. By doing so, one of four conditions could exist. First, if the combined percentage on a given item was 50 or above for a student group, it was said to be important, and if the corresponding faculty percentage was 50 or above, then it was said that the faculty agreed (important/agree). Second, when the students' percentage was below 50 it was considered unimportant, an if the faculty's percentage was also below 50, the were said to agree (unimportant/agree). The third condition arose when student percentages were 50 or above and those of the faculty were below 50 (important/disagree). And finally, the fourth situation was described by a student percentage of less than 50 and a faculty percentage of 50 or

above (unimportant/disagree). The frequencies of the four situations for each of the four groupings of students can be seen in Figure 1.

Insert Figure 1 about here

When the data are presented in this manner it becomes readily apparent that there is considerable agreement between all groupings of students and faculty. The average percent of agreement combining important and unimportant items was approximately 75%.

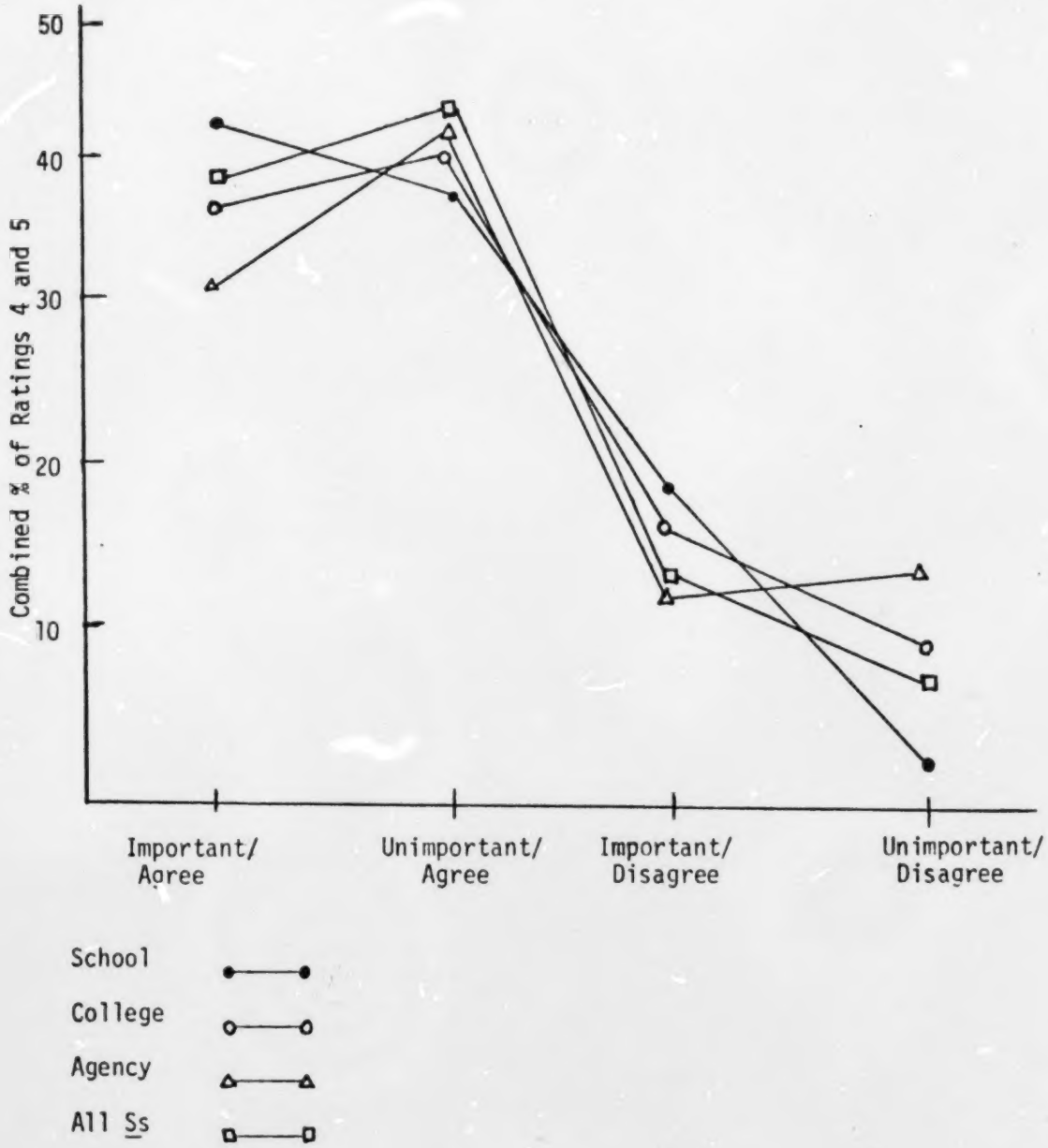
At this point it might be easier and perhaps more important to address the differences that were found to exist. The faculty disagreed with students' perceived importance of such activities as learning about abnormal behavior and diagnosing mental illneee (#12 & 47), using the DOT and OOH (#29 & 40), using Rational-Emotive-Therapy and Client-centered Therapy (#38 & 14), becoming a better teacher (#23), learning how to conduct drug/alcohol counseling (#8 & 2), rehabilitating the disabled (#5), conducting group psychotherapy (#27), and solving one's own problems (#22).

Another discrepancy was found to exist where students indicated items to be unimportant, while the faculty considered these items to of very much or extreme importance. Those items include developmental counseling (#12), organizing a career education program or a guidance program (#42 & 4), consulting with teachers and administrators (#49), learning vocational choice theories (#11), learning more about oneself (#32), using tests of healthy personality (#41), and learning behavior modification techniques (#20).

The extent of the discrepancy between students' expectations and the faculty's perceptions was demonstrated by the fact that they disagreed on the importance of about 25% of the items on the questionnaire.

FIGURE 1

Percentage of Items Rated Important or Unimportant by Students and Agreement or Disagreement by Faculty.



DISCUSSION

Conclusions

The fact that there was not total agreement between students and the faculty does not necessarily imply active or even tacit disagreement. A possible explanation for the observed differences could very well lie in the students' unfamiliarity with the terms used. Another confounding influence might be the specific orientation of the individual faculty members and a disproportionate number of students and/or items describing those orientations (e.g. agencies).

The findings imply that the beginning students in the Counselor Education Department studied have some expectations that will not, and perhaps, should not be met. At this point, it is not possible to determine how long students will maintain these misperceptions about their program. It is encumbent upon counselor educators to become actively involved in developing a systematic method of providing sufficient information in order to accurately and completely portray the philosophy, goals, expectations, and educational experiences as they currently exist in their own departments.

Implications

The sample in this study was taken from a population of Summer Session students who may or may not be representative of those who enroll as full-time students during regular terms. The need to include all available beginning students in order to secure a sufficient number of subjects, prevented using a stratified sample in proportions that students are usually enrolled in the regular terms. That is, using a sample which reflects a proportional representation of those students who identify

elementary, secondary, college, and agency counseling. This is essential if meaningful decisions are to be drawn from the results.

A follow-up of these students might shed some light on the question concerning the maintenance of their erroneous expectations as they proceed through the program, and the effects on their satisfaction with that program after changing their expectations.

In a time of decreasing enrollment, nation-wide, it becomes even more of an important issue to face. It may pay counselor educators real dividends to adress themselves to this matter of expectation versus reality. The closer the two are, the more likely it is that faculty and students alike will find satisfaction.

Summary

A 50-item questionnaire was administered to 38 beginning Counselor Education students during the 1975 Summer Session, and to all full-time faculty in that department. Responses of students were compared to those of the faculty in order to determine the existence and extent of any discrepancies. Students and faculty were found to disagree on approximately 25% of those items. The suggestion was made that the department clearly articulate to new students, its position on a number of relevent points in an attempt to correct any misconceptions held by those students.

References

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SURVEY OF BEGINNING

COUNSELOR EDUCATION STUDENTS

Professional goal_____

Garduate hours in Counseling to date_____

Please rate the following activities according to your expectations of your program in Counselor Education, where:

1 indicates no importance

2 indicates slight importance

3 indicates moderate importance

4 indicates very much importance

5 indicates extreme importance

_____ 1. To administer and interpret projective tests of personality (e.g. TAT,, Rorschach, etc.).

_____ 2. To learn how to conduct marriage and family counseling.

_____ 3. To learn how to make appropriate referrals.

_____ 4. To learn how to organize a guidance program in the schools.

_____ 5. To learn how to rehabilitate the disabled.

_____ 6. To learn computer applications for counseling research.

_____ 7. To learn the dynamics of group counseling.

_____ 8. To learn how to conduct drug/alcohol counseling.

_____ 9. To learn how to use Systematis Desensitization. to cure phobias.

_____ 10. To develop self-initiative.

_____ 11. To learn vocational chouce theories.

_____ 12. To learn how to use developmental counseling with children.

_____ 13. To learn about abnormal and deviant behavior.

_____ 14. To use Client-Centered Therapy (Rogers).

_____ 15. To use psychoanalytic techniques (e.g. dream interpretation, analysis of childhood relationships with parents, etc.).

_____ 16. To learn how to utilize and evaluate occupational/vocational info.

_____ 17. To learn about the physical and psychological growth of the child.

_____ 18. To learn how to motivate others.

_____ 19. To learn the biological bases for behavior.

_____ 20. To learn behavior modification techniques.

____ 21. To learn to control others for their own good.

____ 22. To help me solve some of my own problems.

____ 23. To become a better teacher.

____ 24. To learn how to work effectively with retarded children.

____ 25. To help normal children with adjustment problems.

____ 26. To administer and interpret tests of personality disorder (MMPI).

____ 27. To learn how to be a group psychotherapy leader.

____ 28. To administer and interpret vocational interest tests (Strong-Campbell Interest Inventory, Kuder Vocational Preference Record).

____ 29. To become competent in the use of the Dictionary of Occupational Titles (DOT).

____ 30. To learn how to help others help themselves.

____ 31. To learn how to use Play Therapy with children.

____ 32. To learn about myself, in a general sense.

____ 33. To administer and interpret tests of individual intelligence (WAIS, WISC-R, Stanford-Binet, etc.).

____ 34. To become more tolerant of others.

____ 35. To get practical experience in leading a counseling group.

____ 36. To become a better school administrator.

____ 37. To learn how to conduct group guidance sessions.

____ 38. To learn how to use Rational-Emotive-Therapy (RET).

____ 39. To prepare to enter private counseling/psychotherapy practice.

____ 40. To become competent in the use of the Occupational Outlook Handbook (OOH).

____ 41. To administer and interpret tests of healthy personality (Edwards Personal Preference Schedule, 16PF, California Personality Inventory, etc.).

____ 42. To learn how to develop a career education program.

____ 43. To understand my limitations as well as my strengths.

____ 44. To gain personal insight.

____ 45. To conduct experiments with animal subjects.

____ 46. To learn how to conduct abortion counseling.

____ 47. To diagnose problems of mental illness.

____ 48. To cure counselees of their neuroses.

____ 49. To learn how to consult with teachers and administrators.

____ 50. To conduct experiments with human subjects.